

Simmons hails choice for CIA chief

By The Sun Staff

WASHINGTON - The southeastern Connecticut congressman who's been calling for sweeping reforms within the U.S. intelligence community is hailing the choice of Florida Congressman Porter Goss, chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, to become the new head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Goss was nominated by President Bush Tuesday for the post. And U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons - like Goss, a former CIA operations officer, said the selection marks "an exciting nomination for Connecticut as well as the nation."

Simmons, R-2nd, noted that Goss has strong Connecticut ties; he was born and raised in Waterbury and attended Yale University.

"More important," Simmons said, "he has all the qualifications necessary to meet the challenges that lie ahead. The next director of the CIA will be heading that organization at one of the most critical times in our nation's history."

Goss is an Army veteran who served in the CIA as an operations officer from 1962

to 1971. Simmons, who lives in Stonington and is now serving his second term as Connecticut's 2nd-District congressman, is a Vietnam veteran who later worked with the CIA for 10 years.

Simmons has been vocal in calling for extensive reforms within the CIA; he applauded the ouster of former CIA chief George Tenet earlier this year, and has urged the hiring of more ground personnel as the best means of improving America's intelligence gathering.

"It is essential that the director of the CIA understand the culture of that organization," Simmons said in his prepared statement Tuesday. "It is important that the director knows what the officers in the field experience and what they need to be successful in their difficult and dangerous work. Porter Goss has been there and he has that high level of understanding."

"Congressman Goss will bring a unique combination of life experiences to the CIA, and experience counts," Simmons added. "I can think of no one better qualified to serve in this capacity at this time in America's history, and I am proud he comes from Connecticut."



Simmons